Why Betty Giggled as I Interviewed a Frohman

"I COULD USE YOUR EYES AND TEETH FOR JULIET. BUT YOUR NOSE— NEVER!"

He Thought We Were Stage Struck and Did All the Talking, But It Happened We Did Not Want a Job At All.

By MARGARET LEE.

WHEN Betty and I were ushered into his office, Gustave Frohman was buried in a big leather chair, with a manuscript before his face. He looked just a trifle bored when he saw us, and an expression of something like ennui went over his face. He might just as well have said: "Another would-be Portia!" for it spoke in every line of his features. He gathered himself together, still clinging to the manuscript in the evident hope that we might state our business briefly and begone.

"Mr. Frohman," I said, as Betty hid behind me like a frightened deer, "I came to ask you—"

"Yes, yes, I know," said the manager. "What do you think is your particular line?"

"My particular line?" I asked.

"Yes, your particular line. Do you think you can play Juliet, Camille, or has somebody told you your talent points to character work?"

He had taken me for a stage-struck girl, after all. Betty snickered behind me, and I could not refrain from a smile. Mr. Frohman's eyes narrowed at me, and in a sort of musing way he said:

"Well, I could use your eyes for Juliet, and your teeth."

Betty gave way at this, and I laughed right in the manager's face.

"But not that laugh," he said quickly, and his well trimmed beard went up in indignation that a thought of Juliet could be entertained in the same breath with a laugh like mine. I somehow felt as though mine was not a musical chuckle, after all.

"You might possibly do eccentric character work," Mr. Frohman suggested with a sort of discouraging emphasis on the "might."

"I hope you will excuse me," I said, "but if I'm old enough to start in at that sort of acting the best thing I can do is to withdraw and go back to—"

"Well, you see," the manager drawled slowly, "it isn't only your laugh it's your nose."

My nose! That little bit of a snub thing that nature cruelly set on my face! The nose that Dick always said was never meant for anything but point the way to Heaven. And why I couldn't make mine up to play Juliet. I think you're a little prejudiced, Mr. Frohman."

"So was Shakespeare," he fairly hissed through his teeth in a way that reminded me of Robert Loraine in "Man and Superman."

Betty backed over to the window and glanced out as if she might be measuring the distance to the street below.

"Well, of course, if you are going to stand on physical defects, I suppose artistic temperament and all that sort of thing has nothing whatever to do with it," I said in my most approved indignant way.

"Has nothing whatever to do with it?" he repeated. "It has everything to do with it, my dear young woman, when it is there to be considered, but if you cannot realize that a snub nose is out of keeping with the picture of Juliet there is nothing more for me to say."

Gustave Frohman in "Bike" Costume.

"But, Mr. Frohman, I insist that I could play emotional roles if you would only give me a chance."

"Laugh for me again and I'll tell you what you can play," he said.

"Gracious, I can't laugh on order like that," I told him.

"You must," he insisted.

"I can't," I replied. "I have to have something to laugh at."

"Well, laugh at me."

With this Betty's long looked for explosion came, and the two of us shrieked.

The manager did all but tear his hair. I thought he was mad at the noise we made, but Betty afterward told me he looked straight at my mouth, where the laugh was coming from, and threw his hands up in despair. Then in a quiet, most self-contained way, with an expression on his face that clearly said, "Will you kindly get out of here before I lose my temper," he came over to me and said:

"Has somebody really told you to go on the stage?"

"No," I said calmly, "I didn't come to think that it stood in the way of my playing Juliet!

"What's the matter with my nose?" I finally gained speech to ask while Betty looked solemnly at the toe of her patent leather pump. I couldn't quite bring myself to think that Betty was not on the verge of an explosion.

"Well," said Mr Frohman, "your eyes and teeth are ideal for the part, but Juliet must have more than that—her features must carry out the romantic conception the poet has given her and your nose is just a trifle out of joint—"

"Out of joint," I shrieked clapping my hands to my face to see just what had happened to my nose since I had gone into the Frohman office.

"My dear young lady, you did not permit me to finish. I was about to use the expression metaphorically and not literally. I was about to say that your nose is out of joint with the picture Shakespeare and many actresses have made familiar."

"Oh!" I gasped.

Mr. Frohman had put down his manuscript by this time and was frantically mopping his brow.

"But I could make up my nose, couldn't I? Such a thing is possible. Richard Mansfield had to make up his nose to play Cyrano, and I can't see here for that purpose, but you seemed so anxious to give me a try that I hated to discourage you. I really came for an interview for my paper."

Down he went again into the big leather chair, his beard, like my nose, still pointing skyward.

"My dear young lady, a thousand apologies. Why didn't you tell me at first," he asked.

"I tried to, but you wouldn't let me, and really I am obliged to you for what you've said about my nose. Mother will be pleased."

"I ask your pardon again, and now tell me what it is you want me to say and I'll say it."

"Thank you very kindly, Mr. Frohman," I said, "But you've said it." And as Betty and I slid out of his office Gustave Frohman had a look of real discomfort on his face. He didn't even make a motion to pick up his manuscript. In the hall was a very pretty young girl, manifestly waiting for an audience.

"Is he very hard to talk to?" she asked me, breathlessly.

"No," I said, "he's easy."

Good Things To Eat Not In the Cook Books

"DID YOU ever notice how next to impossible it is to get a complete recipe?" asked a woman the other day who is celebrated for her splendid table, and whose very name is a word of reproach in households presided over by less gifted women. "In spite of the fact that I own almost a library of cook books in various languages, I am continually discovering dishes in out-of-the-way places, which far excel anything I can get from books. A few years ago, while running down antiques, I visited most of the little country towns in Maryland and Virginia, and ate things which it makes me dreamy-eyed to think of. I remember once in Blancksburg, I ate some cake at a country picnic which seemed to open a new land o' cakes to me. Learning that the daughter of my hostess had contributed it as her share of the spread, I thought all would be straight sailing —'easy fruit'—I believe the boys would say.

"With a blush she admitted that it was her work, and agreed willingly to tell how it was made, in fact, she started in then and there, but I suggested that she had better wait until we got home, so that I could put it down in the note book I always take about to write my 'finds' in.

"In my most receptive frame of mind, I reminded her next morning of her promise, with this result: 'I cream two cups of sugar and a cup of butter, and then I take as many eggs as we have that morning.' I glanced anxiously out into the yard, trying to make a mental estimate of the average number of accommodating hens—'then I take just as much milk as mamma can spare, and some flour, and mix them, you know how,' and she looked up with a smiling air of finality. 'And flavoring?' I suggested. 'Oh, yes! I use just as much vanilla as mamma will let me have.' I gasped and laid down my book and pencil. Here was a problem more real than all the so-called plays combined. How did I know whether her mother was stingy or generous, since I was only there as a 'paying guest' and had but a limited acquaintance with the lady?"

Colored cooks, especially of the old mammy variety, are always delighted when their cooking is praised, and they are asked how to make things. They invariably begin with a stagey, "Lawd, honey,"—and continue about like this—"I jes takes some flowah an' bakin' powdah an' salt, an' sieves 'em, an' I adds some shortnin' and pohs in some milk, or watah if the milk's dun guv out. I beats it wif my han, and then I rolls it out, puts in the fruit and biles it." It may be said incidentally that this is how the best apple dumplings in Baltimore are evolved.

In country towns the "bubble reputation" can be acquired most successfully by a good cook. The woman who is spoken of as "the best pound cake baker in town," is indeed a personage; and after a few years of this flattery she probably feels that she is intimately acquainted with the sensations of a queen conferring orders upon courtiers when she honors one with the recipe.